

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☒ no ☐

Property Name: Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant Inventory Number: B-5172  
Address: 4401 Eastern Avenue Historic district: ☐ yes ☒ no  
City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21224 County: Baltimore City  
USGS Quadrangle(s): Baltimore East  
Property Owner: Crown Associates Tax Account ID Number: 26036543B001  
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Tax Map Number: 26  
Project: Red Line Transit Study - Bayview Extension Agency: MTA  
Agency Prepared By: John Milner Associates, Inc.  
Preparer's Name: Katherine Farnham Date Prepared: 2/8/2010  
Documentation is presented in: See sources below.  
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: ☒ Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended  
Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G  
*Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:*  
Name of the District/Property: \_\_\_\_\_  
Inventory Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Eligible: ☐ yes ☐ no Listed: ☐ yes ☐ no  
Site visit by MHT Staff ☐ yes ☒ no Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

This resource is a historic factory complex of approximately 40 buildings erected between 1905 and 1941. Much of the plant is now the Crown Industrial Park, which has its primary entrance at Fait Ave. on the east side of the property. Most of the historic plant buildings are clustered on a triangular parcel bounded by the at-grade Philadelphia Wilmington & Baltimore (PW & B) Railroad tracks on the west and the slightly above-grade former Baltimore & Ohio (B & O) Railroad tracks (now CSX Transportation) on the east. The Eastern Avenue Underpass borders the property to the north.

On the east side of the main complex, a small cluster of plant buildings is extant on the block between Fait Ave. and Foster Ave., immediately east of the CSX tracks. This parcel is now separate from Crown Industrial Park, but should remain within the recommended boundary of the Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant (B-5172).

The southern part of the original plant, including four massive cork silos, now belongs to Cambridge Iron & Metal Co. (B-5165). It was reviewed as an individual historic resource and determined not eligible in February 2009. However, it is proposed that the former Crown Cork & Seal landholdings, which form the western two-thirds of the current Cambridge Iron & Metal property, be reevaluated as part of a larger plant context instead of as part of the Cambridge Iron & Metal Co. This section of property is

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended ☐

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MHT Comments:

[Signature]  
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

3/25/10  
Date

[Signature]  
Reviewer, National Register Program

4/5/10  
Date

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included within the recommended boundary of the Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant (B-5172).

The buildings within the plant are a mixture of multistory and single-level buildings, nearly all of which are interconnected with adjoining buildings. Before 1920, most of the buildings were freestanding. When newer buildings were constructed, they abutted old ones to form large interconnected clusters. Building 48 is the only freestanding structure in the main complex.

The earliest, pre-1910 buildings are multistory brick structures with low-pitched gabled roofs. On a few buildings, construction dates are delineated in the brick on the gable front. Italianate details, such as corbelled cornices and segmental-arched windows, are common.

The primary building of the plant is Building 40, a majestic five-story Tudor Revival brick building at the north end of the complex. Constructed in 1917, it overlooked the original alignment of Eastern Ave. with an office entrance near the east end of its north façade, and an employee entrance at the west end. It has crenellated parapets, contrasting stone trim, and large banks of multilight steel windows. An original bay window and Tudor-style entrance door are extant at the northeast corner, within a newer entrance.

Later buildings are relatively utilitarian, with the exception of Building 40-B. This building wraps around the north side of Building 40's lower three floors, spanning the former right-of-way of Eastern Ave. Building 40-B was constructed in 1935, after Eastern Ave. was rerouted into the underpass during the early 1930s and its original right-of-way was closed off. The building has distinctive concrete Art Deco details on its east façade, which became the new entrance to the main offices of the plant. The first level of Building 40-B is a high-ceilinged vehicle area with inverted-bell concrete support columns and a gridlike coffered ceiling. The 1917 entrances to the plant are extant within this area.

Other buildings from the 1930s form the central and south part of the main complex, south of the oldest buildings. These are of concrete and brick construction with flat roofs and no decorative elements. Bands of operable multilight steel windows are common, and the interiors are most often a single level open to the top. The 1930s and 1940s buildings around the south perimeter are typically one or two stories in height. More central buildings are three or four stories tall.

The parcel of land east of the main complex between Fait and Foster Avenues is a group of barn-like concrete, brick, and frame buildings, set parallel with the railroad tracks and all facing west toward the plant along an alley. They are one to two stories tall, and one has a monitor roof.

The buildings in the Cambridge Iron & Metal property are dominated by the group of four concrete cork silos, constructed in 1938. The rest of the buildings date from ca. 1930s, including a flat-roofed, three-story storage building and a one-story factory building.

Company founder William Painter was the inventor of the crown cork, a novel way of sealing glass bottles. Patented in 1892, a crown is a circular disc of cork within a metal disk with a crimped metal skirt. Placed on a bottle with the cork disc inside, the seal was a vast improvement to earlier sealing methods. The invention of crowns also led to the standardization of bottle cap sizes for the first time.

Painter's company, the Bottle Seal Co., established its first offices at 500-506 E. Monument St., and subsequently became Crown Cork & Seal. In 1897, the company moved to its first factory at 1511-1523 Guilford Ave. Although this plant was spared by the Baltimore Fire of 1904, company leaders decided it was too dangerous to have all of its operations in one place. It immediately established a new 17-acre plant in Highlandtown, and the first three buildings were completed in 1905, 1906, and 1907. Six buildings were added in the 1910s, two in 1928, and over a dozen in the 1930s, including a large new cork silo complex to the

#### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

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Reviewer, National Register Program

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outh.

In 1928, Crown Cork & Seal closed its Guilford Ave. offices and consolidated its Baltimore operations in Highlandtown. Over time, it acquired other companies as subsidiaries or merged with them, and diversified its operations. Plants were opened in other states, often for subsidiaries like Crown Can, although Baltimore remained the main facility. Over the history of the company, in addition to manufacturing crown caps, it made screw caps, stoppers, can and jar lids, Dacro sanitary milk bottle caps, cans and metal containers, aluminum foil, automotive gaskets, shoe heel pads, crowning and filling machinery, carbonating and mixing equipment, conveyor belts, and more. It also processed raw cork into discs, rods, sheets, gaskets, sponge cork and rubber products, granulated cork, ribbon cork, and cap visor material. The cork was imported primarily from Spain, Portugal, and North Africa, though some came from Italy and France. While many of the company's functions were handled in satellite facilities, caps, crowns, cold rolled metal, and all cork products were made in the Highlandtown plant.

In 1937, Crown Cork & Seal acquired 23 acres of adjacent land south of the plant. This site was used for a cold reducing steel mill and a tinning division. Other additions included a cork grinding division and a glass mill.

In September 1940, a fire in the cork storage yard south of the plant destroyed \$500,000 worth of the company's cork reserves. The storage area was soon rebuilt, but cork was now housed in scattered warehouses rather than a single location.

During World War II, the company was forced to stop tinning and developed an electrolytic steel plating process. Bottling and canning manufacture was sidelined for defense materials. Defense contracts included manufacture of gas mask canisters, gun mounts, and other defense materials. The facilities reverted to peacetime in 1945 and began addressing a huge backlog of wartime orders for bottling and canning materials.

In 1946, Crown Cork & Seal began construction of a new daylight plant to house its machinery division, which at that point was housed in inadequate leased quarters at Barclay and Oliver Sts. The new plant had 300,000 square feet of manufacturing space on a single floor, with a small second level for offices and a cafeteria. This plant, completed in 1947, was located south of O'Donnell St. and east of the B & O Railroad line.

In 1953, all of Crown Cork & Seal's subsidiaries merged into the parent company, and the company began construction of a new can building next to the machinery plant. In 1956, the Baltimore plant was reorganized. The company re-engineered its manufacturing processes and techniques, and rearranged its crown and closure manufacturing. Operations which formerly occupied a variety of multistory buildings were consolidated into compact, tandem-style production lines in one-story buildings. This was done to save manufacturing by eliminating "wasteful, inefficient, and costly handling of materials." By 1958, all operations had been consolidated to the modern one-story complex south of O'Donnell St. With this move, Crown Cork & Seal vacated more than 1 million square feet in the old plant and put it up for sale. Its headquarters were moved from Baltimore to Philadelphia, where it had a large can plant. Today, Crown Holdings is an international corporation and still an innovator in beverage technology.

Cambridge Iron & Metal purchased the southern portion of the old Crown Cork & Seal property in 1958, and remains there today. The remainder of the plant is now the Crown Industrial Park and houses a variety of businesses that lease space.

The Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant has a sweeping corporate history of innovation and technological achievement, much of it formulated within the laboratories and work spaces within the Highlandtown plant buildings. The company's work during its time there embraced a vast spectrum of cork, metal, and glass products, many of which innovated new technology that changed capping and sealing methods and products forever. It had a worldwide impact in its development of containers and caps of all kinds. Due to its association with important inventions and manufacturing processes, it meets the requirements of National Register

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW**

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

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## Criterion A.

The plant is also highly intact. While many of its buildings are deteriorated or have undergone some alterations, such as window replacements or infill of original openings, it retains the overall historic appearance of an early-to-mid twentieth century manufacturing plant. Though far quieter than before, it continues to house small industrial operations. Aside from the Cambridge Iron & Metal-owned area of the plant complex, little has been lost, and integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association has been preserved for the most part. The Crown Cork & Seal is an excellent preserved example of a large pre-World War II industrial complex, and meets the requirements of National Register Criterion C.

Given the significance and integrity of this resource, the Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant is recommended eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. It is not associated with any person of transcendent importance and does not meet the requirements of National Register Criterion B. It was not evaluated for eligibility under National Register Criterion D during the historic architecture survey. The period of significance for this resource is ca. 1905-1947, which includes the complex's history from the time of its construction until the modern daylight plant was built nearby and operations were shifted there.

It is also recommended that the western two-thirds of the Cambridge Iron & Metal property (B-5165) be incorporated within the boundary of the eligible Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant, as the larger extant buildings and structures on the property are clearly associated with Crown Cork & Seal. The four massive cork silos in particular are an important remnant of the plant's original function. It is recommended that Cambridge Iron & Metal be reviewed again for National Register eligibility, this time as part of the B-5172 resource rather than individually.

## Sources:

Crown Cork & Seal Co. Report of the Directors to the Stockholders for the years 1929-40, 1941-1951, 1952-1958. On file in the Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Crown Cork & Seal Co. The CROWN (company newsletter), June 1939. On file in the Maryland Room, Enoch Pratt Free Library.

Crown Holdings, Inc. Crown History Timeline. Available online at [http://www.crowncork.com/about/about\\_history.php](http://www.crowncork.com/about/about_history.php).

Romer, Frank. 50 Years of Beverage Bottling 1892-1942. Baltimore: Crown Cork & Seal Co., 1943.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1902, 1914, 1928, 1936, 1951, 1953.

Unknown. "Baltimore Industries - the Crown Cork & Seal Co." Baltimore, April 1952, pp. 30-31, 73-74.

Wilbor, John R. The Story of a Crown. Baltimore: Crown Cork & Seal Co., 1924.

Zembala, Dennis M., ed. Baltimore: Industrial Gateway on the Chesapeake Bay. Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Industry, 1995.

## MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended \_\_\_\_\_

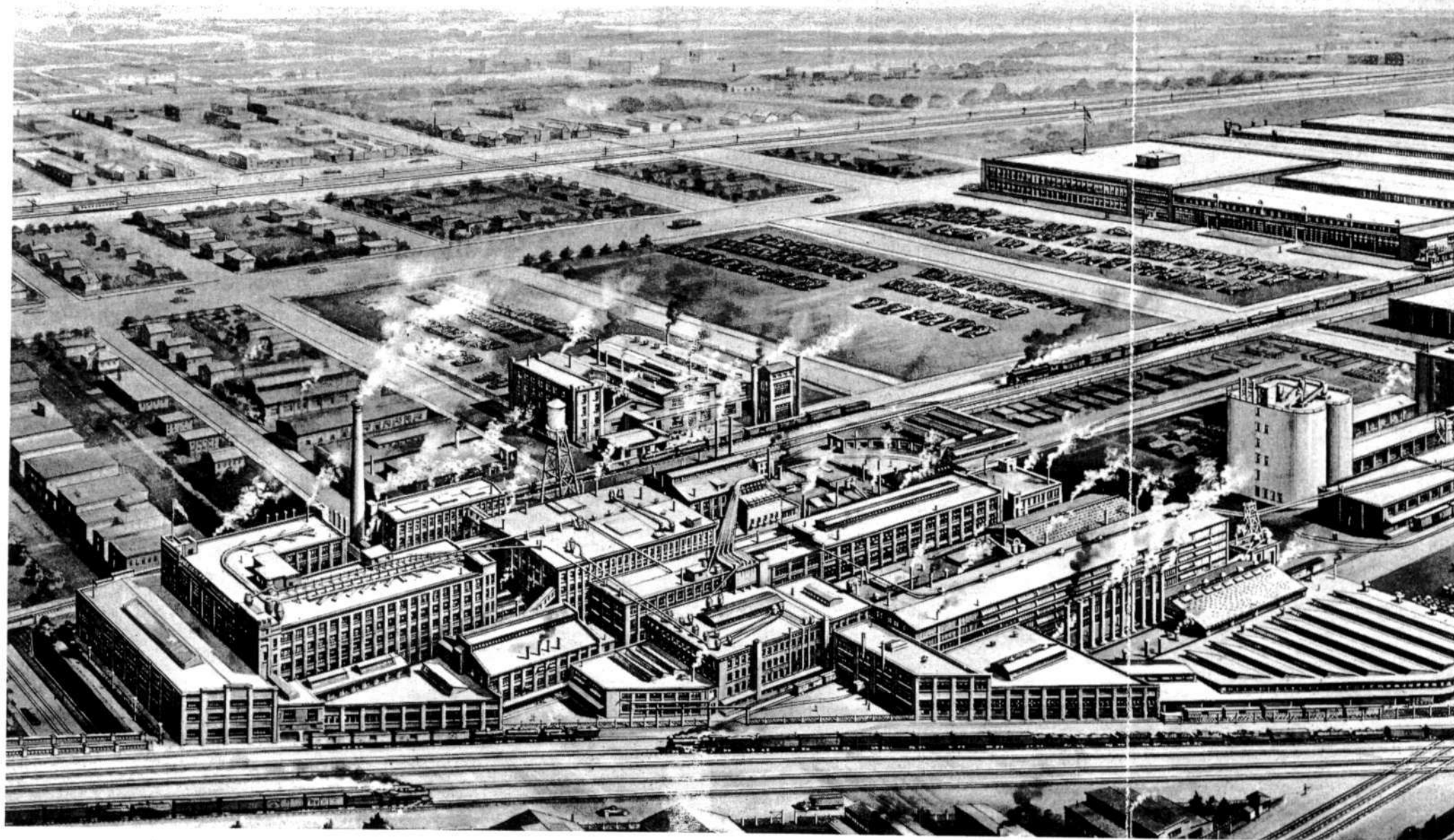
Eligibility not recommended \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    Considerations:    \_\_\_ A    \_\_\_ B    \_\_\_ C    \_\_\_ D    \_\_\_ E    \_\_\_ F    \_\_\_ G

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Date





Plant Overview  
ca. 1950



B-5172

# BUILDING CONSTRUCTION DATES

## DATES

### CROWN INDUSTRIAL PARK



AREAS BY FLOORS AND TOTAL AREAS

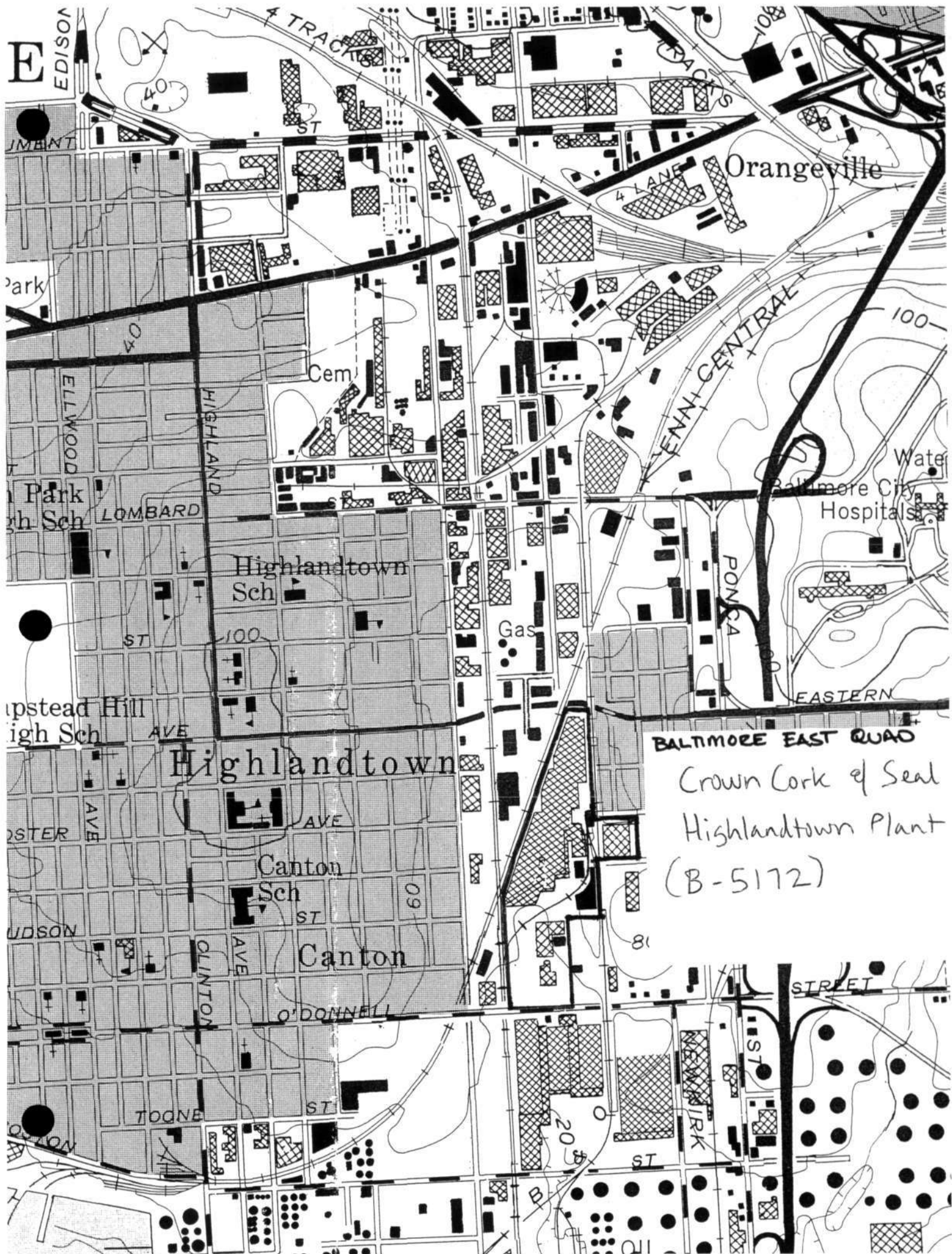
BLOC. NO.	1ST FLOOR	2ND FLOOR	3RD FLOOR	4TH FLOOR	5TH FLOOR	TOTAL AREA	OVERALL DIMENSIONS
40	38127	38121	35661	35661	35661	183229	70x372x33x147
40-A	24319	17039	-	-	-	41340	100x210 IRR
40-B	OPEN	20400	20400	-	-	40800	100x224 IRR
41	-	1900	-	-	-	1900	BOILER HOUSE
42	7840	7840	7840	-	-	23520	49x180
44	15218	15218	15218	-	-	45654	30x184
44-A	10588	9488	-	-	-	20076	100x167 IRR
45	28034	28034	28034	28034	28034	140170	107x262
46	21000	21000	21000	-	-	84000	105x200
46-A	14260	14260	14260	14260	-	57040	82x230
46-B	OPEN	9435	9435	-	-	18870	85x111
46-C	OPEN	14224	14224	-	-	28448	112x127
48	3922	-	-	-	-	3922	53x74
49	14720	-	-	-	-	14720	218x130 IRR
49-A	20950	-	-	-	-	20950	123x172 IRR
50	24270	-	-	-	-	24270	106x247 IRR
51	32190	-	-	-	-	32190	111x290
51-A	28600	-	-	-	-	28600	52x550
51-B	31626	31626	31626	10804	-	105682	73x385 IRR
52	8560	-	-	-	-	8560	80x107
52-A	7674	-	-	-	-	7674	85x115 IRR
53	19902	26395	10243	-	-	56540	140x255 IRR
54	9760	9760	-	-	-	19520	80x122
55	11870	-	-	-	-	11870	80x142
56	14124	-	-	-	-	14124	78x80
56-A	58478	-	-	-	-	58478	230x472 IRR



#74 = 1936

B-5172









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Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

July 2008

MD SHPO

View of buildings 40 and 40B to SE

#1 of 22



B-5172

Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

August 2009

MD SHPO

View to S from S. Kresson St., Bldg 40, 40A, 40B

# 2 of 22





B-5172

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

July 2009

MD SHPO

View to S of Bldg. 40B from Eastern Ave. underpass

# 3 of 22





B-5172

Crown Corle ad Seed Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

July 2009

MD SHPO

General view to SW from Macon St

#4 of 22



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Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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Former trajectory of Eastern Ave to W, bldg 40B entrance

#5 of 22





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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

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Buildings east of E at D + miles at Fair Ave, view to NE

#6 of 22



B-5172

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

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View to SW from Bal O/CSX tracks at Foster Ave.

# 7 of 22



B-5172

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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View to N of Bldgs. 45 at 48

# 8 of 22





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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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View to NW of Bldgs. 46C and 45

#9 of 22



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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

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View to W of Bldg. 54, 51B at 50

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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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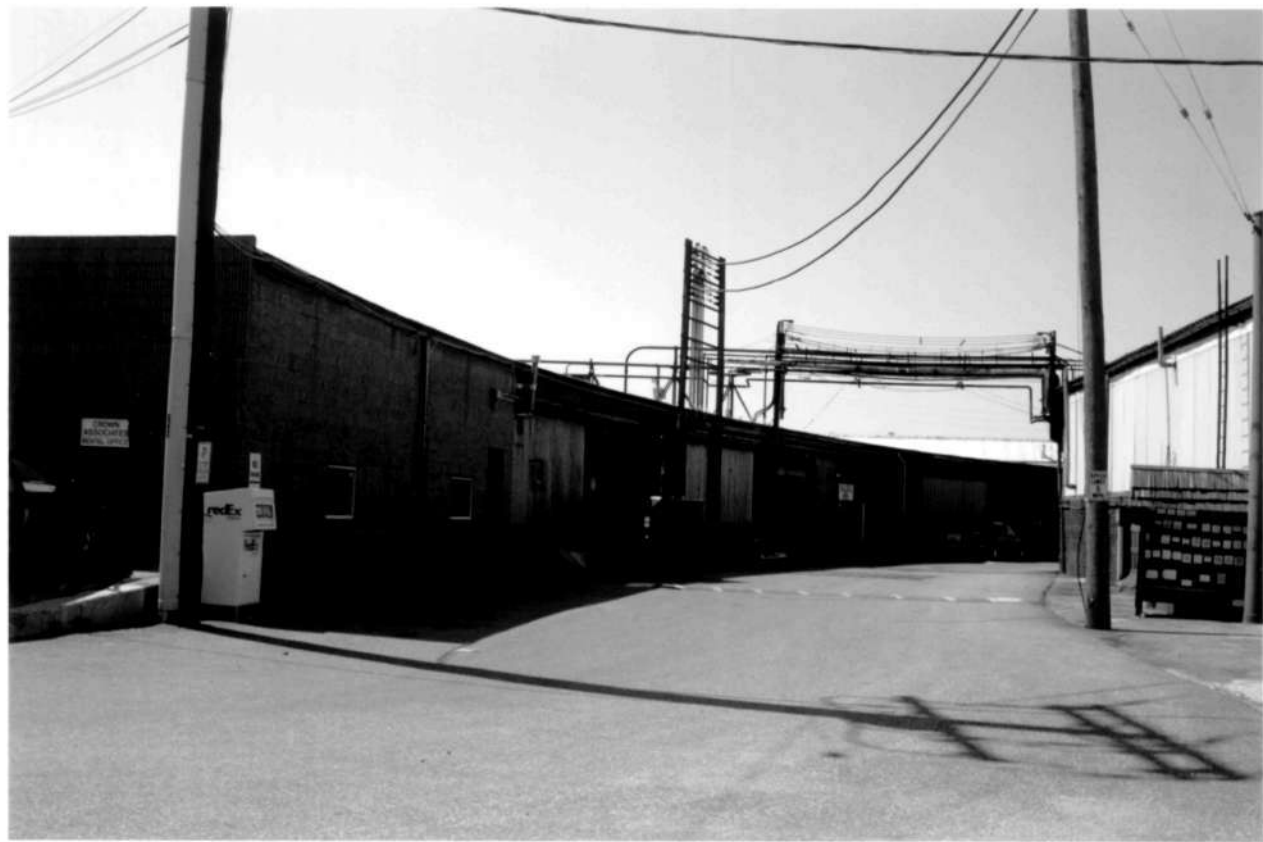
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View to NW from Fair Ave entrance

#11 of 22





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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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View to S of Bridge 419 + 541

# 12 of 22



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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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view to SW of Bldg. 49 at cork silos

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B-5172

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

K. Farnham

August 2009

MD SHPO

View N from O'Donnell St showing Cambridge Iron &  
Metal property (B-5165) w/ cork silos, main plant  
at rear

#14 of 22





B-5172

Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

July 2008

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View N of Bldg. 55, 51B, 54

# 15 of 22



B-5172

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S Traum

July 2008

MD SH00

View to N of passageway on W side of bldg SIA

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B-5172

Crown Corle el Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

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Interior of Bldg. 51A, view to N.

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Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

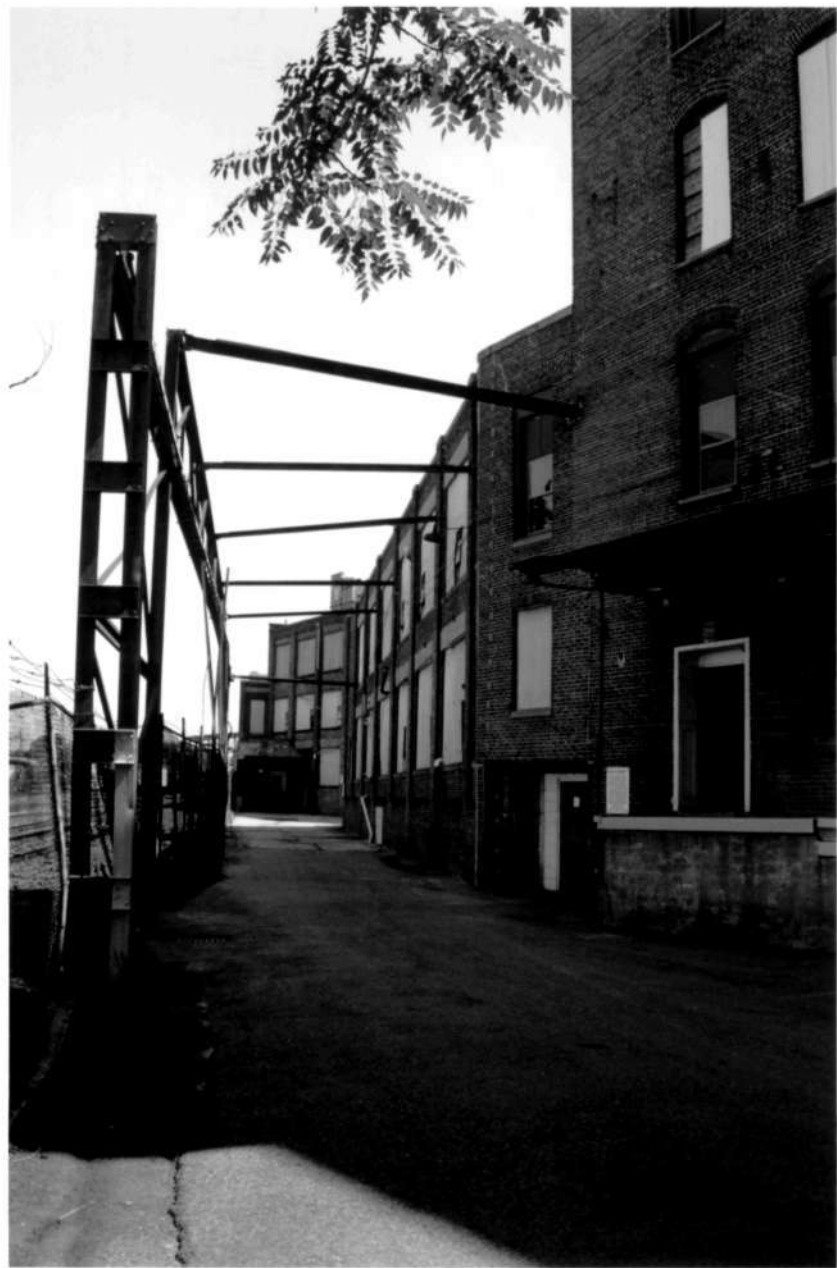
S. Traum

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Tunnel under Bldg. 53, view to NE

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B-5177

Crown Corle at Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

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Road along W. side next to Bldg. 44A, looking NE  
#19 of 22



B-5172

Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

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Tunnel + parking under Bldg 40B, showing former  
route of Eastern Ave. View to NE

# 20 of 22



B-5172

Crown Cork & Seal Highlandtown Plant

Baltimore City, MD

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July 2008

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View to SW of 1917 entrance gate + tunnel under

Blkg. 40A (1928)

#21 of 22





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Crown Cork at Seal Highlandtown Plant  
Baltimore City, MD

S. Traum

July 2008

MD SHPO

View to SE of Eastern Ave. entrance to Bldg. 40  
(1917), now inside parking level of Bldg. 40B

#22 of 22